

HB 4493: Genocide and Holocaust Education

Testimony of Chantelle Dial

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Good morning. My name is Chantelle Dial; I am a third year law student at MSU Law.

A year ago, as a student, I stood in an empty gas chamber at the Auschwitz concentration camp. The scratch marks and emotional echoes of the room told a powerful story. Tormented walls, two holes in the ceiling to pour poison through, pain etched in the air, and a pervading, haunting, clinging sadness. And yet, at the very center of the gas chamber was a single vase of red and white roses. Red roses paying tribute to a heartbreaking past. White roses expressing hope for a better future. Education and our students are our better future. My own education, goals, and focuses changed after I learned more about the Holocaust

Two months ago, as an intern, I stood in a quiet court room in The Netherlands. Sitting across from me were two men charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. My work at the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, was a daily lesson in the darkest potential of the human race and a daily reminder that hatred and fear and ignorance still blot our recent human history. Genocide is not a thing of the past.

Four years ago, as a teacher, I stood in front of my junior high language arts class and introduced a new unit on the Holocaust. Over half of my class had no idea what “Holocaust” or “genocide” meant.

Today, I stand here as student, intern, educator, and advocate in support of this bill. I stand with and for knowledge. Knowledge is the road to avoid the mistakes of the past. I stand with ensuring our students receive an education that allows them to learn about and gaze through the haunted eyes of the past to better mold the future. I stand with educating our students about the terrible potential of discrimination and ignorance—with acknowledging the past and supporting our students to build a stronger future.

In the words of Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, “to forget a holocaust is to kill twice”; “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. . . . Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” We must not allow public policy to remain silent.

Thank you,

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